

**Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Seymour, February 11, 1807, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO THOMAS SEYMOUR J. MSS.**

Washington, February 11, 1807.

Sir, —The mass of business which occurs during a session of the Legislature, renders me necessarily unpunctual in acknowledging the receipt of letters, and in answering those which will admit of delay. This must be my apology for being so late in noticing the receipt of the letter of December 20th, addressed to me by yourself, and several other republican characters of your State of high respectability. I have seen with deep concern the afflicting oppression under which the republican citizens of Connecticut suffer from an unjust majority. The truths expressed in your letter have been long exposed to the nation through the channel of the public papers, and are the more readily believed because most of the States during the momentary ascendancy of kindred majorities in them, have seen the same spirit of oppression prevail.

With respect to the countervailing prosecutions now instituted in the Court of the U S in Connecticut, I had heard but little, & certainly, I believe, never expressed a sentiment on them. That a spirit of indignation and retaliation should arise when an opportunity should present itself, was too much within the human constitution to excite either surprise or censure, and confined to an appeal to truth only, it cannot lessen the useful freedom of the press.

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As to myself, conscious that there was not a *truth* on earth which I feared should be known, I have lent myself willingly as the subject of a great experiment, which was to prove that an administration, conducting itself with integrity and common understanding, cannot be battered down, even by the falsehoods of a licentious press, and consequently still less by the press, as restrained within the legal & wholesome limits of truth. This experiment was wanting for the world to demonstrate the falsehood of the pretext that freedom of

the press is incompatible with orderly government. I have never therefore even contradicted the thousands of calumnies so industriously propagated against myself. But the fact being once established, that the press is impotent when it abandons itself to falsehood, I leave to others to restore it to its strength, by recalling it within the pale of truth. Within that it is a noble institution, equally the friend of science & of civil liberty. If this can once be effected in your State, I trust we shall soon see its citizens rally to the republican principles of our Constitution, which unite their sister-States into one family. It would seem impossible that an intelligent people, with the faculty of reading & right of thinking, should continue much longer to slumber under the pupilage of an interested aristocracy of priests & lawyers, persuading them to distrust themselves, & to let them think for them. I sincerely wish that your efforts may awaken them from this voluntary degradation of mind, restore them to a due estimate of themselves & their fellow-citizens, and a just abhorrence of the falsehoods & artifices which have seduced them. Experience of the use made by federalism of whatever comes from me, obliges me to suggest the caution of considering my letter as private. I pray you to present me respectfully to the other gentlemen who joined in the letter to me, & to whom this is equally addressed, and to accept yourself my salutations, & assurances of great esteem & consideration.